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THE
ADVANTAGES

OF THE
Scripture Revelation
CONSIDERED.

FROM
ROMANS III. 1. 2.

By JOHN TREN. K

COLCHESTER:

Printed by J. PILBOROUGH, and Sold by
the Booksellers of the Town.
M.DCC.XXXV.

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The Advantages of the Scripture Revelation considered.

R O M. III. 1. 2.

What Advantage then hath the Jew? Or what Profit is there of Circumcision? Much every Way; chiefly because that unto them were committed the Oracles of G O D.



TH E *Jews*, as it is manifest from all the Gospel History, were a Nation, full of their own Worth and Excellency; and assured of the divine Favour and Acceptance, on account of the peculiar Privileges which they had long enjoyed above all the Nations of the Earth. This Pride and Self conceit carried them to despise and con-

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demn every Man that was not of their Religion, as *rejected* of GOD, and beneath *their* Notice and Conversation, let his *moral* Qualifications be what they would. When they heard of *Salvation* published and offered to *all* Men, thro' *Repentance* towards GOD, and *Faith* in the Lord JESUS CHRIST, without any Distinction, it mortified their haughty Minds to that *Degree*, that, rather than be put on a *Level* with the rest of the World, they *obstinately* shut their Eyes against the Light of the Gospel, and refused to acknowledge CHRIST JESUS as the promised MESSIA, notwithstanding the manifold *glaring* Testimonies he gave unto them of his *divine* Mission. It is with a View of convincing his Countrymen of their *Error* and *Folly*, in this Respect, that Paul penn'd this Epistle to the *Romans*. Herein he endeavours to shew them, that neither Jew nor *Gentile*, had any *Right* and *Title* to the Favour of GOD, on account of any *Works* of their own, since both were alike involved in a State of *Guilt*, and had rendered themselves obnoxious to *Condemnation* and *Wrath*; that it was an absurd and vain Thing for them to buoy themselves up on that *positive* Law GOD had given them, as tho' their Observance of the *external* Rites of that, would atone for their *Immoralities*; GOD, he tells them, was no such *Rejecter* of Persons. but
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would render unto every Man according to his *Deeds*: The *Heathen*, who had no other *Law*, but that of *Nature* and *Reason*, should be judged and sentenced according to the *Tenor* of the *Law* they were under; and the *Jews* should be tried and condemned, if *Transgressors*, by that *written Law* they were under. Cap. ii. 12. *For as many as have sinned without Law, shall also perish without Law; and as many as have sinned in the Law, shall be judged by the Law.* And forasmuch as the *Jews* were so ready to boast of their *Interest* in *G O D*, as *their G O D*, and to glory in the *Light* and *Knowledge* they received from *that Law*, which *G O D* had so *graciously* given them: He lets them know, they ought to consider that their *moral Conduct* should on this Account be the more *virtuous*; and their *Immortality* would be deemed more *heinous* and *aggravated*, from the 17th to the 24th Verse. He assures them, it was the *Heart* and *Life G O D* principally looked to; and that he would form his Judgment of Men from the *Disposition* of the one, and the *Curse* of the other. If *that* was naught, *G O D* would make no Account of any religious *Privileges* enjoy'd, but would regard the *Jew* no more than a *Heathen*; and if *that* was good, the honest and virtuous *Heathen* should be accepted of, and respected by *G O D*, as well as the *Jew*; and rise up in Judgment against them, and condemn their Disobedience.

Disobedience. For it was not an *outward* Profession, nor the bearing any external *Covenant Sign*, that constituted a Jew acceptable and well-pleasing in G O D's Sight; but inward *Holiness*, and Purity of Heart alone, whatever Men thought or spake of it, would render him Praile-worthy to G O D. This is *Paul's* reasoning from the 25th Verse of the 2d Chapter. *For Circumcision verily profiteth if thou keep the Law, but if thou be a Breaker of the Law, thy Circumcision is made Uncircumcision; i. e. tho' circumcised, thou shalt be looked upon in the same Condition with an uncircumcised Heathen. Therefore if the Uncircumcision keep the Righteousness of the Law, i. e. Observe those moral Precepts contained in the Law of Moses, shall not his Uncircumcision be counted for Circumcision? i. e. Shall he not be accepted of G O D, as well as tho' he were circumcised? &c.* The 3d Chapter begins with obviating an Objection that seemed to lie against the preceding Way of reasoning, and *Paul* was too close an Arguer, and too intent upon establishing the foregoing Doctrine, to let it pass unobserved. *What Advantage then hath the Jew? Or what Profit is there of Circumcision? i. e. If this be the Case, that the Jew, whose Heart is vicious, and Life immoral, shall find no particular Favour with G O D, on account of his external Privileges, where is the Benefit of being*

ing of that Nation? What doth it signify, whether a Man be born a *Jew* or a *Gentile*? To what Use and Purpose is it to endure the painful Operation of *Circumcision*? and to carry about in the Flesh *that* Mark of being in *special* Covenant with GOD? *Much every Way*. It is of great Service on all Accounts; tho' I shall mention this alone now, as *chief*, because *that unto them were committed the Oracles of GOD*; they alone were entrusted with the *inspired* Writings of *Moses*, in which GOD was pleased to make a Declaration of his Mind and Will.

THE Words plainly represent unto us the great *Advantage* of an external *Revelation* from GOD; which *Paul* thought a *special Privilege*, which the circumcised *Jew* enjoyed, and asserts to be of great Service and Profit to that Nation. And if the *Jew* ought to look upon the *Revelation* he enjoy'd, as very advantageous to him, surely we *Christians* must look upon the *Revelation* we have received from CHRIST and his *Apostles*, together with theirs, as an unspeakable *Privilege*, and should prize it as most highly beneficial to us. A Discourse on such a Subject can be at no Time unsuitable to a *Christian* Auditory, and in this our Day, it must be esteemed very *seasonable*, when it is become a prevailing Mode to run down the *Bible*, as a
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very needless Book, and to speak of the *Scriptures* with Scorn and Contempt. Should I be able to let you see the abundant Reason you have for Thankfulness to a good GOD, for the Gospel *Revelation*; who in his Providence hath been so distinguishingly kind to you, as to call you to the Knowledge of it; which he hath left the greatest Part of our Race destitute of; your *Time* and my *Labour* cannot be thought to be lost. Let us then soberly and seriously consider in a particular Manner, the great *Advantage* and *Profit* we enjoy, by having the sacred *Oracles* of GOD committed to us.

First. WITH respect to *Moral Duties*, we are taught by the *Scripture Revelation* the Knowledge of them, with more *Ease*, in less *Time*, and to a greater *Exactness*, than we could possibly expect to be, by *mere unassisted Reason*. And if this Assertion be made good, we must presently see the great Advantage of the *Scripture Revelation*, and conclude ourselves *peculiarly* bless'd of GOD, in being admitted to the Enjoyment of it.

IT would be reckoned, I know, an *Out of the Way* Thing, at *this Time* of Day, to depreciate and run down *natural Reason*: And am sure I should be the *last Man*, that could knowingly be guilty of it. I rejoice

to see the Day, when Men begin to be sensible of the *Dignity of Human Nature*, and how far they are exalted in the Rank of created Beings, above *Stocks and Stones and Brutes*; hoping this Light and Knowledge will let them see what great Things are expected by their All-wise Maker, from such Creatures; and how much they vilify and act beneath themselves, when they live like *Beasts*. Reason, I freely allow, is our Ornament and Glory, the noblest Part of the *Divine Image* that is enstamped upon us; what we can never enough be thankful to our All-gracious Creator for; who hereby teacheth us more than the *Beasts of the Earth*, and maketh us wiser than the *Fowls of Heaven*. * The right Use of our rational Powers and Faculties, I acknowledge, would enable us to answer the Ends of our Creation; to act becoming our Obligations to GOD our Maker; and would lead us to *Happiness and Bliss*. And when I have said this, no Body can imagine that I am any Way an Enemy to Reason, or would endeavour thro' Prejudice, to lessen the Power of it. But yet I dare not exalt the Power of Human Reason so high, as to render *Revelation* entirely needless; because it would cast such a Reflection on the *Wisdom of GOD*, as I cannot think of

* Job xxxv. 11.

without Horror. I take it for granted that the sacred *Scriptures* are of divine Authority; that our *Bibles* are the Book of GOD, and contain what GOD at *sundry Times*, and in *divers Manners* spake in Time past unto the *Fathers* by the *Prophets*, and what GOD hath in *those last Days* spoken unto us by his Son *. And if this confessedly divine Revelation answer no *valuable Ends* and *Purposes*, but what were before attainable by mere *unassisted Reason*, GOD would have acted a *vain Part*, which cannot be supposed of the infinitely wise Being.

THE *Morals* of *Christianity* are such, as that they are no sooner heard, than seen and acknowledged to be the *Dictates* of *Reason*; are *immediately* found to be so every Way agreeable to the *Light* of our *Natures*, that they strike upon us with a *double Force*. They are what every *reasonable Being* [would he but duly exercise his natural Powers and Faculties] must perceive to be his *Duty*; what GOD requires of him, and what he ought to do. His *Conscience*, if consulted in a *proper Manner*, could not but tell him, that to do justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly

* Heb. i. 1.

with GOD *, or, to live soberly, righteously, and godly †; was what he was obliged to by the *Law* of his *Nature*.

BUT then Man's *Attainments* in Knowledge of the *plainest* and most *necessary* Things, are but *gradual*, and the Effects of *Observation* and *Experience*. He comes into the World *destitute* of all Ideas. *Sensation* and *Reflection* are the two great *Fountains*, from whence they are all derived. And for him *alone*, out of his *own* Mind, to work up a *complete* System of Moral Duty, there must be great *Labour* and *Length* of Time, even supposing him in a State of *Innocence*. But if we consider Mankind as *fall'n* Creatures, in a State of *Corruption* and *Depravity*, naturally inclined to be *biass'd* and govern'd by *Appetite*, *Lust*, and *Passion*; generally *viciated* in their *Education*, and too apt to be led away by evil *Examples*; the Pains that they take to know and understand their Duty, must be necessarily *greater*, and a *longer* Time must necessarily be employed in searching and finding it out: And even with all their *Diligence* and *Study*, 'tis a thousand to one, but they remain ignorant of *some* Points, and mistaken in *others*.

* Micah vi. 8.

† Titus ii. 11.

This we find to be Matter of *Fact*, that among the *Heathen* none set up for Philosophers, or Teachers of *Moral Virtue*, till they were advanced in Years; and what Learning they had, was attained by indefatigable Industry and Travel; and after all, what an *imperfect*? what a *confused* System of Morals is to be found in any of their Works? How dark and melancholy then must be the Case of the poor *common* People? What Ignorance and Error must they be involved in, who had not the Opportunity and Leisure to inform themselves, as the *Sages* had? And tho' among the *Heathen* and *Mahometan* Nations of the World, at *this* Time, we may discover more Light and Knowledge, as to *Morality*, they are plainly indebted to the *Christian* Revelation for it, which was propagated throughout the Earth, and to be *preached* to every Creature under Heaven. And even our *Modern Deists* and *Unbelievers*; some of whom must be allowed to speak and write well of *Moral Virtue* (*whether they see or will own it or no*) would never have had such *clear* and *sound* Notions of *Virtue*, had they not been born in a Land of *Light*, and conversed with, and read the Works of *Christians*.

BUT now that we have in our *Bibles*, a most *compleat* and perfect System of *Moral Duties*; set before us in the *plainest* and
clearest

clearest Light; recommended and enforced with the *Authority* of GOD: A Person that reads and considers the *Scriptures*, is *easily* led into the Knowledge of them, and may understand *more* with relation to them in a Year, than a mere *Heathen* can in many. The Work is cut out to his Hand. He is spared the *Time* and *Trouble* of deep *Thought* and *Reasoning*; and is not perplexed with the *Differences* of Opinions to be found among the Writings of their wise Men. *Perspicuity*, *Fulness*, and *Uniformity*; are the peculiar Properties of the *Christian* Scheme of *Morality*. The Duty we are commanded, is not *hidden* from us, neither is it far off. It is not in *Heaven*, that we should say, *Who shall go up for us to Heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear and do it?* Neither is it beyond the *Sea*, that we should say, *Who shall go over the Sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it?* but the Word is very nigh unto us, in our Mouths, and in our Hearts, that we may do it *.

AND is it not a very great *Advantage*, which we obtain from *Revelation*, that we are not left to the long and laborious Searches of strict and close *Reason* to know our Duty? Is it not a great *Happiness*, which

* Deut. xxx. 12. 13.

we enjoy, that we have it all exposed to open View in the plainest and clearest Light? we are not now *oblig'd* to examine into, and consider the *Nature* and *Relation* of Things, to know what is *right* and ought to be done, or what is *wrong* and ought to be avoided. We are not *forced* to travel by Sea or Land, in order to find out Persons of Knowledge and Experience, by whose entertaining *Conversation* we might be instructed in the Principles of *Morality* and *Virtue*. We are not put to the Fatigue of tumbling over voluminous Writings of *Authors*, to discover the Truth; by whose false Reasonings we should be in perpetual Danger also of being misled; for which Thing a great Part of Mankind are not *naturally* qualified; a great Part could not be at the *Charge* of it; and a great Part could not find *Leisure* and *Opportunity* from their daily Labour for a Livelihood for doing it; and those who could, would find *Abundance* of Labour and Time spent to little or no Purpose.

BUT now in the Bible we have *Morality* in all its *Parts* and *Branches*, brought down level to the lowest Capacities. There we have it compriz'd in so narrow a *Compass*, that the most busy Person in Life, can find Time (*if he will*) for the Perusal of it; and there we have it so truly and exactly stated, that we cannot

cannot be set wrong, if we form our Judgment from thence. Doth not this *Revelation* then well become the *Wisdom*, and discover the *Goodness* of GOD in making it? And have not we, into whose Hands it is put, Reason to be thankful to GOD for it? Could we discover no *other* Use of the *Scripture Revelation*, yet upon *this* Account we might say, we had much *Advantage* and *Profit* in having committed to us the *Oracles* of GOD.

Secondly. REVELATION gives to us the strongest *Assurance* possible, not only of GOD's *Reconcilableness*, but that he is in CHRIST JESUS, *actually reconciling the World to himself, not imputing their Trespases unto them* *. This is an Happiness, which we cannot too much prize, nor be thankful enough to GOD for; inasmuch as the want of this Assurance cannot but fill the Mind with frequent uneasy *Doubts* and *Fears*.

My charitable *Sentiments*, with respect to the *Unchristian* Part of the World, are well known, It is my settled Opinion, that GOD is no Respector of Persons, but in every Nation he that feareth GOD, and worketh

* 2 Cor. v. 19.

Righteousness, will be accepted of him *. The sincerely virtuous and good Man, in whatever Part of the habitable World he lives, of whatever Nation or Religion he be, thro' the Merits of CHRIST'S Death by the Grace of GOD imputed to him, tho' he hath never heard of a Redeemer, and consequently never believed in him, shall not miss of a suitable Reward of that Degree of Virtue and Goodness, which he hath been assisted to attain.

BUT yet I am far from thinking that we Christians are in no better Case than they. We have much stronger Foundation, for solid Peace and Comfort of Mind, on Reflection, than they can possibly be supposed to have, who are utter Strangers to the Christian Revelation.

THAT all Mankind have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of GOD; that by their Iniquities, they have forfeited the divine Favour, and rendered themselves obnoxious to his Anger and Displeasure, is a Truth that no Man, whether Christian or Heathen, that knows any Thing at all of GOD and himself, can possibly be ignorant of. He hath a

* Acts x. 34.

Conscience within him, that will and must be his *Remembrancer* in this Respect. That he therefore stands in need of *Pardon* and *Forgiveness* at the Hand of GOD, is what no one can doubt of. For without GOD's forgiving *Mercy* he must necessarily lie under the heavy Load of his just *Wrath*.

THAT *Repentance* is in its own Nature, a necessary Means of Pardon, must be obvious to every thinking Man. For it is impossible to be supposed of an infinitely *holy* and *just* GOD, that he should admit an *impenitent* Offender into his *Grace* and *Favour*; that he should bestow *Forgiveness* on a rebellious Creature, who is so far from being sorry at his *ungrateful* and *vile* Carriage to his Maker, that he continueth still of the same *obstinate* Spirit and Temper. Could this be supposed of GOD, his *Holiness* might justly be called in question, and he could not be properly said to be of *purser Eyes*, than to behold *Iniquity with Approbation* *. That Reformation and Amendment of Life; a constant Study and Endeavour to rectify past Mistakes, and to walk more *circumspectly* for Time to come, is a necessary concomitant of a sincere *Repentance*, must be universally acknowledged.

* Habakkuk i. 13.

For how can I be said to be heartily *sorry* and *grieved* for that which I am *ready* and disposed again to commit, and do not fail of doing whenever I have Opportunity? Such a *Repentance* (if it deserves the Name) is a barefac'd *Mockery* of the Person we have offended, and must be treated as such, for certain, by an *All-wise* GOD.

THAT this *Repentance*, this hearty Grief and Sorrow for Sins committed, attended with a thorough *Amendment* of Heart and Life, is all the *Compensation*, that poor offending *Man* can make to his offended GOD, in order to receive his *Pardon*, no doubt can be made. Hitherto thinking Men of all Parties are agreed, both *Christians* and *Deists*.

BUT then the Question to be resolved is, whether GOD will accept of *this alone*, as a *sufficient* Atonement; whether every such penitent Offender can *depend* upon, and be *assured* of, Forgiveness from GOD. This is what the Deniers of the *Christian Revelation* plead for. But I take it impossible to be proved to a convinced Sinner's thorough *Satisfaction*.

I ALLOW the *merciful* Nature of GOD, when seriously considered, may afford *some* room for Hope, that since this is all the *Satisfaction*

isfaction they can possibly make, he will be graciously pleased to accept it from them. I moreover allow that the merciful *Dispensations of Providence* towards them; GOD's daily bestowing upon them a great Variety of *Favours and Blessings*; his giving them *Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seasons, filling their Hearts with Food and Gladness* *. These Things, I allow, might *incline* them to think, that they should not miss of pardoning *Mercy* upon their *Repentance*. Add to this, that GOD hath implanted in our Natures a *Disposition* to forgive an offending Brother, upon his *Repentance*; which Disposition, as it comes from him, the great *Author* of our Natures, they might conclude to be agreeable to his own Nature.

THESE *Considerations* seem to make for a sure *Peace* of Mind, in an utter *Stranger* to the Gospel, tho' he hath transgressed the Law of his Nature, that he shall yet be forgiven upon his *Repentance*. That these Things, when considered, may be sufficient to keep him from *Despair*, and even kindle some *Expectations* of Forgiveness, I think must be granted. But that they were not *satisfactory* to give perfect *Relief* and *Ease* to their troubled

* Acts xiv. 17.

Consciences, is manifest from hence, that not *one* Soul we know of among them, from the *Prince* to the *Peasant*, from the *Philosopher* to the *Fool*, could be content with this alone. It was the *universal* Opinion, (at least the *universal* Practice) that something *more* than their *Repentance* was *necessary* to procure the Restoration of the Divine Favour. Every one therefore betook himself to *Offerings* and *Sacrifices*, of the most precious and *costly* Things, which they had, to ingratiate himself again with the angry Deity. Whence this *general* Practice arose, I will not stand to determine; tho' it seems not unlikely to be derived from *Revelation* at first, handed down by *Tradition* from Father to Son, since the Days of *Noah*, whom we find immediately sacrificing, on his coming out of the Ark *. This, I say, seems not *unlikely*, because there appears no *Foundation* in the *Nature* and *Reason* of Things, for imagining such *propitiatory* Sacrifices acceptable to GOD. For what are *thousands* of *Rams*, and *ten Thousand Rivers* of *Oyl* to him, whose are all the *Beasts* of the *Forest*, and the *Cattle* upon a *thousand Hills*; whose is the *Earth* and the *Fulness* thereof? Whether this be the *Original* of *Sacrifices* or no, is not material to my present Purpose.

* Gen. viii. 20.

It is sufficient that this Practice reigned among all *Ranks* and *Degrees* of Men, all the *Heathen* World over.

Now if *Repentance* alone could by *Reason* be discovered to be an *Atonement* fit to be depended on for *Forgiveness* and *Acceptance* after Sins committed, it is very strange [it is next to impossible] that there should not *one* be found among them all [not *one* of their wise Men and *Philosophers*] but what ran into this Practice; that could not satisfy himself on his *Repentance* without it. It is in vain here to urge that a Sense of *Guilt* will carry Men to the wildest *Extravagancies*. In some *particular* Cases 'tis manifest beyond all Contradiction. For who else but a Person distracted with *Dread* and *Horror* of Mind, would offer to the *compassionate* Parent of Mankind, by way of *Propitiation*, his *first born* for his Transgression; the Fruit of his *Body*, for the Sin of his *Soul*? But here you must suppose the whole *Heathen* World, thus infatuated, (even those *wise* and great Men, who at *other* Times, when it will serve a Purpose, shall be so magnified for their *Sense* and *Wisdom*, as to be set in *Competition* with JESUS CHRIST himself in this Respect.)

To me the Case of the considerate *Heathen* seems to be this: As they had the most manifest Tokens of GOD's *Goodness* and *Mercy* in the Dispensations of his *Providence* towards them; which gave them *some* Encouragement to hope; so they saw *Reason* to conclude the Deity most *holy* and *just*; a Being who had the strictest *Regard* possible to his *Authority* and *Laws*; who would not suffer them to be despised and trampled upon with *Impunity*; that tho' a *private* Person, without any Detriment to himself, might often pass by Injuries and Affronts, on the bare Repentance of the Offender, yet the Case was widely different in the great Governor of the World; that something *extraordinary* was necessary to pacify and appease him; and therefore to their Repentance they would still be adding by way of *Atonement*, what lay in their Power, tho' at the same Time, when they consulted their Reason, they could not place much *Trust* and *Confidence* herein. And forasmuch as they had heard of *Sacrifices* to the Deity, being practised in Times *past*, they would *still* be found in the Use of them, tho' they could not tell what good *End* it would serve. Their Minds therefore must be continually fluctuating between *Hope* and *Fear*; and their inward *Peace* and *Comfort* upon their Repentance, of Consequence, must be constantly *ebbing* and *flowing* at best.

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HERE then is the *Advantage* of the *Scripture* Revelation, that we are thereby delivered out of this *uncertain* State. We *Christians* have the *same* Hope and Reason, that the *Heathens* could entertain; and moreover this Assurance, that thro' the *Grace* of *G O D*, *Christ Jesus*, tasted *Death* for every *Man* *; that by him we have now received the *Atonement* †; that *G O D* hath set him forth to be a *Propitiation* thro' *Faith* in his *Blood*, to declare his *Righteousness*, for the *Remission* of *Sins* that are past, thro' the *Forbearance* of *G O D*, to declare, I say, at this *Time* his *Righteousness*, that he might be just, and the *Justifier* of him that believeth in *Jesus* §. This is an *Encouragement* to *Repentance* the *Heathen* *World* knows not. In the *Gospel* we behold with open *Face* the offended *Majesty* of *Heaven*, sitting on a *Throne* of *Mercy*, and holding out the *Sceptre* of *Grace*, calling, inviting, and entreating *Sinners* to return to their *Duty* and *Allegiance* to him, thro' *Christ*. We cannot only say with the *Heathen* *Ninevites*, *Let us turn every one from his evil Way, and from the Violence that is in our Hands, who can tell, if G O D will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce*

* Heb. ii. 9.

† Rom. v. 11.

§ Rom. iii. 25. 26.

*'Anger, that we perish not *? But we know that if we confess our Sins, GOD is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness §. This is a sure Foundation of Peace and Comfort to a Penitent Believer's Mind, which Heathens are unacquainted with. And is it a small Thing now to be favour'd with the Scripture Revelation? Would any Person, that knows what the Gospel is, wish to be an unbaptized Heathen?*

Thirdly. A larger Portion of the Grace and Assistance of the Holy Spirit of GOD, is a constant Attendant of the Scripture Revelation, which Consideration also will serve to endear it the more to us.

.THAT our Natures have received some considerable Alteration for the Worse, since they first came out of their pure Maker's Hands, is a Truth so plain and obvious, as not to escape the Notice of every discerning Eye. The Heathen World became very sensible of it, and I cannot see how any Man, that hath made the least Observation on himself, can remain ignorant of it. We

* Jonah iii. 8.

§ 1 John i. 9.

come into the World [as is visible to all] under great *Disadvantages* for Virtue and Goodness. The corrupted *Blood*, that runs through the *Veins* of Parents, ever since it was at first tainted by the *Fall* and Apostacy of *Adam*, is communicated to their *Offspring*; and Children in the general are born, as much *Heirs* to their Fathers *Weaknesses* and vicious Inclinations, as they are to their temporal *Estates*. The Parents *Foibles* and *Infirmities*, and the Lusts, which they were under the *peculiar* Influences of, as soon discover themselves in common in their *Posterity*, as the particular *Features* of their Faces. And how it may be accounted for, I shall not pretend to say, yet I believe we must all some Time or other have observed, that we *naturally* possess more of the bad, than the good *Qualities* of those who begat us, and brought us forth. This natural *Depravity* becomes soon confirmed and rivetted, by the ill Management used in our *Education* whilst *Infants*, by the unreasonable *Fondness* of Parents, or the imprudent *Conduct* of those who nurse us, we are foolishly *pamper'd* and *indulg'd* in our *Appetites* and *Passions*, so that they daily take Root, and continually grow stronger and stronger within us. And as we grow up, the *Multitude* of wicked *Examples*, and the *Number* of sensible *Objects* we are daily conversant with, and the *Power* of prevailing

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Customs

Custom, as they find *Lusts* within us, to prompt us to comply with their *Temptations*, so they too often meet with an easy Victory over us, and draw us aside into the *Paths* of Sin. This seems to be the *common* Lot of all Mankind; we are all *weak* and *frail*, naturally *prone*, early *encouraged*, strongly *tempted* at all Times to Sin and Vice.

IN this degenerate, depraved State of *Human* Nature, nothing surely is more *desirable*, than to be aided and assisted by some *kind* and *powerful* Hand, in order to conflict with so many and great Enemies. There can be no considerate Man for certain, but what must *wish* for, and would *rejoice* to receive *additional* Strength from above; *Grace* from Heaven; to support him in walking the difficult *Paths* of *Wisdom* and *Virtue*; and to bear him up against all the *Opposition*, he constantly meets with. It must be good *News* to him, to hear that Almighty GOD is willing and ready to *second* his Endeavours, and to bring him off *Conqueror* in the End, if he be not wanting to exert his own Powers.

To assert that it is an *impossible* Thing for Almighty GOD to communicate his Grace and Help to our Mind, there cannot be the least *Shadow* of Reason; and it would
be

be a very absurd Thing to disbelieve it, because we know not the *Way* and *Manner* in which it is done. Doubtless our All-wise Creator, who made us what we are, and therefore is perfectly acquainted with our inward Frame, may have infinite *Ways* of influencing us, that we are utter Strangers to. - Nay, so little do we know of ourselves, that we cannot tell how our own Spirits move and act, nor conceive how sensible *Objects* are the Occasion and Means of Thoughts arising within us; and yet we are not so foolish to disbelieve the Thing. We find by Experience there are Variety of Means, by which one Man can influence another to do what he would have him; and surely we will not, we cannot deny to GOD our Maker a Power over us, which we find he hath given us one over another.

THE *Heathen* World saw their Need of a *superior* Power to their own, to form their Minds and Lives to Virtue and Goodness; and therefore attributed the Wisdom and Greatness, that any among them attained to, unto Divine Influence. *So far in their Opinion was this Doctrine from being absurd and impossible!* There is one or two Passages in PLATO, one of the wisest of them to this Purpose, which I cannot but lay before you.

He introduceth *SOCRATES* as speaking thus to *ALCIBIADES*, *I hope, by the Help of GOD, that you and I shall become better than we are* *. And in another Place, *methinks as we read in HOMER, that Minerva dissipated the Mist, that covered Diomedes's Eyes, so it is necessary GOD should in the first Place scatter the Darkness that covers your Soul; and afterwards give you those Remedies that are necessary to put you in a Condition of discerning Good and Evil; for at present you know not how to make a Difference between them* †. And once more: *If it please GOD you will advance considerably, and in a very little Time, otherwise your Endeavours will be fruitless* ||. Doth not now this wise *Heathen* plainly discover what great Need he thought the wisest and best of Men stood in of *Divine* Influence and Help? This should make us more willing to entertain the *same* Doctrine, when we find it most plainly declared in the *Scripture Revelation*, since we observe the natural Light of *Reason* gave such Evidence of it.

* See the Works of *PLATO* abridg'd in the English Translation. Page 210.

† Page 250.

|| Page 269.

THE Jews were very well appriz'd, not only of the *Possibility*, but of the *Reality* of GOD's communicating himself and Will to the Minds of Men; since they had so long a Succession of *Prophets* among them, who came unto them Time after Time, by immediate *Inspiration*, declaring in the Name of GOD, what he required of them, and would have them do. And their Notion of the Divine Influence was not confined to *extraordinary* Occasions, but extended to the common *ordinary* Affairs of a religious Life; as is manifest from those innumerable Petitions of the Psalmist to this Effect, *Create in me a clean Heart, O GOD, and renew a right Spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy Presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me* *. *Open thou mine Eyes, that I may behold wondrous Things out of thy Law. Teach me, O LORD, the Way of thy Statutes. Give me Understanding. Make me to go in the Path of thy Commandments. Incline mine Heart unto thy Testimonies. Quicken me in thy Way* || Of which Expressions we cannot make any possible Sense, unless we allow of a *Divine Concurrence* with our own

* Psalm li. 10. 11.

|| Psalm cxix. 18. 33. 34. 35. 36.

rational Powers in the Business of Religion and Virtue.

WITH respect to the *New Testament Revelation*, the Doctrine of the Co-operation of the Spirit of GOD with our own natural Faculties, as to every Step of the *Spiritual Life*, is to interwoven with the *Christian Scheme* of Salvation, that I cannot see how it can possibly be taken away without undermining the very *Foundations* of Christianity. We are there told, that *if any Man hath not the Spirit of CHRIST, he is none of his* *. *Except a Man be born of the Water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of GOD* †. We are there said, to *mortify thro' the Spirit the Deeds of the Flesh* ‡. *To be strengthened with Might thro' the Spirit in the inward Man, to do GOD's Will* §. *To be led by the Spirit of GOD* §. *To be made an Habitation of GOD through the Spirit* *. The Holy Spirit is there said to be unto us, a Spirit of

* Rom. viii. 9.

† John iii. 5.

‡ Rom. viii. 13.

§ Eph. iii. 16.

§ Rom. viii. 14.

§ Eph. ii. 22.

Sanctification *. *To purify our Souls* ||. *To help our Infirmites* †. *To dwell in us* §. *And abide with us* ¶. If these *Phrases*, and many more of the like Nature must be so interpreted, as to denote no more than the bare Operations of our own Minds, in a natural Way, without any *Divine Influence*; any Help and *supernatural Assistance* from GOD; the Use of Words must be quite lost, and the *Bible* become a mere Nose of Wax, to be turned into what Shape we please, as best suits our Inclinations and Fancy. This *Divine Influence*, or these *Operations* of the Spirit of GOD on the Mind, I freely allow, are and must be in a Way agreeable to our *reasonable* Natures, and every Way consistent with the *free Agency* of Man. Our natural *Liberty* is not hereby destroyed, neither is the Work of *Holiness* done without us. At the same Time that we are assured GOD *worketh in us both to will, and to do*. We read, *We are to work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling* *; which plainly shews we are not merely passive, nor so

* 2 Thess. ii. 13.

† 1 Peter i. 22.

‡ Rom. viii. 26.

§ Rom. viii. 11.

¶ 1 John ii. 27.

* Phil. ii. 12. 13.

irresistably

irresistably acted upon, as tho' we were Stocks and Stones. For then there would be nothing of *Virtue* in what we did, nor any room for a *Reward*.

WITH respect to the gracious *Influences* of the Divine Spirit, they are imparted in various Degrees and Measures to the Children of Men. All are not *equally* Partakers of them. Here GOD acts like a *Sovereign*, and dispenseth his own free *Gifts*, in what *Way* and *Manner*, and in what *Proportion*, and to what *Persons* he pleaseth; and none dare say to him, *What doest thou? Or why doest thou thus?*

THERE is none indeed of the whole *Human* Race entirely destitute of these *Divine* Influences. All Mankind are so far favoured with them, as is *necessary* to make them virtuous and good. They are the *Effects* of our Blessed LORD's meritorious *Death* and *Passion*. And now that he is exalted, in reward of his *Sufferings*, to the Right Hand of GOD his Father; the *Spirit* of GOD is put into his Hands, and he maketh use of him, as seemeth him good, to act *subordinately* under him; to carry on the Father's Designs of *Grace* towards an *Apostate* World. And forasmuch as thro' the Grace of GOD, *he tasted Death for every*
Man,

Man, in order to render *G O D* reconciled to them on the *Terms* of the Gospel, he takes care that every *Man* shall have that *Grace* bestowed upon him, as is *sufficient* to enable him, if he will *improve* it, to be reconciled to *G O D*.

BUT notwithstanding this, the *Christian* hath vastly the Advantage of the *Heathen* in this Respect; and that on account of the *Revelation* he enjoyeth. There is a peculiar Power of the *Spirit*, that always accompanies the *Word*, in order to *enable* those to whom it is sent, to comply with the Contents of it. Hence the Word preached and heard is called the *Seed of Regeneration* *, and the *Spirit*, on account of the quickening, Life giving Power, that is inherent in it †.

BUT besides this powerful Influence of the *Spirit*, which the *Word* is never without, we have by *Revelation*, an express *Promise* from *G O D* of the *Spirit*, on our requesting him, at his Hands; which we are also encouraged to do, by a Declaration of *G O D*'s *Willingness* and *Readiness* to bestow him.

* 1 Peter i. 23.

† 2 Cor. iii. 8.

*Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. If a Son shall ask Bread of any of you, that is a Father, will he give him a Stone? Or if he ask a Fish, will he for a Fish give him a Serpent? Or if he shall ask an Egg, will he offer him a Scorpion? If ye then being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him *? So that now having also, a great High-Priest, that is passed into the Heavens for us, JESUS the Son of GOD, one that can be touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities, since he was in all Points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin, we may come boldly to the Throne of Grace, to obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in Time of Need ||. Which Promise the Heathen World being destitute of, have not the Encouragement to seek his Divine Influences by Prayer that Christians have; and therefore do not obtain such a large Measure of his Assistance, which the other by the due Use of the appointed Means may be sup-*

* Luke xi. 9. 10.

|| Heb. iv. 14. 15. 16.

pos'd to do; as being thereby better dispos'd to receive it.

Fourthly. ANOTHER Advantage that accrues from the *Scripture Revelation* is, that we have by it, for an Encouragement to Virtue and Goodness, and in order to deter us from the Practice of Vice, an express Assurance of an immortal Life, after Death, in which the *righteous* shall be gloriously rewarded, and the *wicked* severely punished.

SUCH is the *present* Condition of Human Nature, as I intimated above, thro' inbred Corruption, wrong Education, the Prevalency of Example and Custom, that a Thing appearing *reasonable* to us, is not a sufficiently strong Inducement to us to practise it. Not our *bodily* Appetites and Lusts have so powerful an Ascendant over us, that in order to please and gratify them, we are frequently hurried away to Actions, tho' our *Consciences* fly in our Faces, and the *Light* of our own Minds shew us the *Unreasonableness* of them. To stem their Torrent, the *Heathen* Philosophers laboured hard, and constantly oppos'd thereto, the Consideration of the *native* Excellency and Beauty of Virtue, and the Disagreeableness of Vice to our *reasonable* Natures. To prefer the indulging our sensual

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sual *Appetites* and *Affections* to the complying with the Dictates of *Reason* (they say well) is acting beneath the *Dignity* of Man, and demeaning ourselves to the Condition of *Brutes*. They often insist on the present *immediate* Consequences of the *One*, and the *Other* Course; how that a vicious Practice is ever attended with *inward* Uneasiness, bitter *Self-reflections*, and agonizing Fears and Dread; on the contrary, that Peace and Serenity of Mind, unspeakable Satisfaction and Pleasure of Soul upon *after-thought*, was the *necessary* Attendant on Virtue; a Never-failing Consequence of acting like Men; so that Vice, as its *own* Punishment, carried always its Sting in its Tail, whereas Virtue rewarded its Followers with a good Conscience, whose *Pleasures* were a *continual* Feast. And upon *this* Subject it must be owned, they talk *admirably* fine, and the reading of their Discourses is a *profitable* Entertainment to an *advanced* Christian.

BUT alas! What signify these Arguments alone to a Man, who hath no Views beyond the *present* Life and World? Virtue, he would *soon* perceive, was not the *direct* Road to the Honours, Profits, and Pleasures of this Earth. Would he be rich and powerful, and able to satisfy his Heart's Desire?

Desire? he cannot *help* seeing that he must not stand on Principles of Justice, Honour, and Honesty, but make a Sacrifice of them *all*, whenever they stood in his Way. And as to the *inward* Pangs and Remorse of Conscience which he might *hear* of, and sometimes *feel*, as the Consequence of a *vicious* Conduct, he would soon find a *sufficient* Antidote against them, by giving himself up to a *thoughtless* Behaviour, and an *incessant* Pursuit after, and Indulgence of *sensual* Enjoyments.

WE meet with, *it is true*, in some of their Writings, Stories of a *future* State. But what are they? the *vain* Imaginations, and *chimerical* Fancies of a *poetical* Brain, dressed up in such a fabulous ridiculous Manner, as sooner to raise the *Laughter*, than command the *Faith* of a Man of *common* Sense and Reason.

THE *Philosophers* indeed, talk of a future State more *gravely*, and their Thoughts about it, appear plainly to be the Result of their Reason. Sometimes you shall hear them talking of the *Immortality* of the Soul, in *such* a Strain, and with so much *seeming* Confidence, as you would think they were just come from reading *St. Paul's* Epistles. At other Times you shall see them hesitating

ting and stumbling, like Persons *groping* their Way in the dark, and *altogether* overwhelmed with *Doubts* and *Despondency*. The *common* Frame and Temper of their Minds seems to be this :

THEY had some *probable* pleasing Hopes, some *fond* Desires, some Longings after Immortality ; the *Make* and *Constitution* of Man's Nature ; his *understanding* Power and Faculty ; his *Liberty* of Action, gave them Reason to think him an *accountable* Creature, and that GOD would *some time or other* bring him to a Trial how he had behaved in the present Life. The *different, unequal* Dispensations of Providence, with relation to *good* and *bad* Men, *seem'd* to require *another* State, in which GOD more *fully* would discover his *Love* to Virtue, and *Hatred* of Vice, than could be perceived in his *present* Government of the World. They were therefore *inclined* to entertain a Notion, that there was *something* in Man that would escape *Corruption* in the Grave, and exist when *this* Life and World should be no more. But *still* Clouds and Darkness obscured the *distant* Prospect ; and they could never *work* up themselves by the *Strength* of Reason to an *assured* Belief of the Happiness of good Men, and the *Misery* of wicked Men after Death ; and therefore

fore did not recommend the Practice of Virtue, nor discourage the Practice of Vice on *any* Motives and Arguments of *this* Nature.

I CANNOT better express their Condition, than by relating a Passage out of C I C E R O, who *saw* as far, and *reasoned* as closely as any of the Ancients. In his *Tusculan Disputations* * (as a learned *Author* and *Divine* translates him §, which Translation tho' it be not a literal one, yet, I think, fully expresseth the Sense) he saith, *I am not going to utter Oracles, nor give Demonstrations; but inconsiderable Man that I am, among many others, I will give you my Guess as to what is likely. For I can go no further than Probabilities. Let them talk of Certainties, who profess themselves to be wise. Some think the Soul is extinguished with the Body. Others that it is presently dissipated after it hath taken its Leave of the Carcase. Others that it remains in Being a long while. Others that it lasteth always. Now G O D knows which of these Opinions is true; and which of them is most probable is a great Question. And after having rejected the Opinion that the Soul is*

* Page 2570 Editionis Verburgii.

§ N. Tyler against Deism. Page 97.

nothing at all, saith he *, *the Opinions of the rest give us hope, (if this be pleasing to you) that it is possible, that the Souls when they part from the Bodies may go to Heaven, as to their own House.* To this his Friend who discourseth with him replies, *I am very desirous it should be so, and if it be not, yet I would feign be persuaded of it.* And upon recommending PLATO's Treatise of the Soul to him, his Friend replies, *I assent to what he says, I know not how, while I am reading it ; but when I have laid the Book aside, and begin to think with myself of the Soul's Immortality, all my Assent to it slides away from me.* Thus far one of the wisest among the Heathen ; and by what he says, we may see as in a Glass the *dark, uncertain, variable Condition* the World without a Revelation was in, with respect to a future State.

BUT now *Life and Immortality* are brought to *Light* by the Gospel, and we have the strongest Assurance given us from Heaven, that our Existence is so far from being terminated by the Limits of the present Life, that it will continue to endless Ages after Death. We are assured in Scripture, that GOD hath appointed a Day wherein he will

judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given Assurance to all Men, in that he hath raised him from the Dead *. We expressly read, the Hour is coming, in the which all that are in their Graves shall hear the Voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the Resurrection of Life; and they that have done evil to the Resurrection of Damnation ||.

WHAT a prodigious Weight doth the certain Revelation of this one Truth bring to the Cause and Interest of Virtue in the World? What a Spur and Incentive is it? How irresistible almost, to Acts of Goodness, when I can extend my Views beyond the Grave, and behold with an Eye of Faith, my Saviour with out-stretched Arms, holding forth an immortal Crown of Glory, as the Reward of my Constancy and Perseverance therein? What is there possibly can be put into the Scale of Vice, to counterballance this? Tell a Man of the Honours of the present World, and endeavour to raise his ambitious Views, to aggrandize himself at the Expence of all that is virtuous

* Acts xvii. 9.

|| John v. 28. 29.

and good ; the Temptation (tho' at first it might tickle his *vain* Fancy) yet how must it lose its Influence and Power, when he considers it as an *undoubted* Truth, that *when he dieth, his Glory shall not descend after him* *, and that he shall rise out of his Grave to *Shame and everlasting Contempt* ||? What Relish can a Man possibly have for *carnal* Delights and *sensual* Pleasures, when he knows and considers, that the *certain* and *eternal* Consequence will be *weeping, wailing, and gnashing of Teeth*? Let a Man be ever so intent upon amassing together the *Wealth* of this World, if his Conscience be *seriously* consulted and made to answer to this *plain* Question, *What is a Man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what will a Man give in Exchange for his Soul* †? I will engage his Courage will be cool'd, at least for the present.

A CHRISTIAN must be notoriously blind to his own *Interest*, and act the Part of a *Fool*, if in his Judgment and Choice, he prefers Vice to Virtue. For who (that is in his Senses) would *willingly* enjoy a

* Psalm xlix. 17.

|| Daniel -ii. 1.

† Matthew xvi. 26.

little, short-liv'd *temporary* Delight and Pleasure, to be adjudged to *everlasting* Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels? It is therefore that wicked and vicious Men, go under the Denomination of *Fools* in Scripture. And the properest Term for certain it is, to be used concerning them, since no *Folly* in Life can be equal to theirs.

Is not this *Revelation* then of great *Profit* and *Advantage* to us? What *Doubts* and *Uncertainties* [most painful and racking] are we hereby deliver'd from? What *Agony* must accompany the Pangs of Death to a considerate Man, when he doth not know, into *what* State his Soul will be introduc'd, or what will become of him, when he shall have breath'd his last upon Earth? With what *Satisfaction* and *Joy*, might we well suppose, would the *Soul* of the fore-named *Heathen* Philosopher have been filled, had a Person been sent by GOD to put into his Hands the Gospel of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, in the midst of his *uncertain*, *wavering* Thoughts of a *future* State? how would the *full* Assurance he would *there* find, of a glorious and immortal Life after this, for a righteous Person, have eas'd his troubled Mind, and kindled inexpressible Raptures of Pleasure in his Soul? What an *hearty* Welcome would he have given to the

glad Tidings? and what a *keen* Edge would it have set on his Diligence and Care in espousing the Cause of Virtue? O *Christians!* we live and see *that* Day of Light and Knowledge, communicated by CHRIST JESUS, which many Kings and Prophets among the *Jews*, and Philosophers among the *Heathen*, would have *greatly* rejoiced, and have given their Crowns, and their *all*, to have seen, but did not see it; and we can never be *truly* sensible of our *happy* Privilege in this Respect, unless we could in some Measure feel the *perplexing* Thoughts, which the want of it did, and would Occasion.

I WILL conclude this Subject with a Reflection or two.

First. WHAT an *awful* Reverence, and *high* Esteem should we have for our *Bibles*? how *thankful* should we be to GOD for them? how should we make them our *daily* Meditation and Study? and let ourselves *vigorously* to the Practice of those Duties enjoined in them?

THE Bible, *Christians*, is the Fund and Store-house of all saving Knowledge; the Foundation of all our *present* Joy, and the Charter of all our *future* Expectations and Hopes.

Hopes. *Here* GOD hath shewn us what is *good*, and what he *requireth* of us to be saved. *Here* GOD hath laid a *sure* Corner-Stone for us to build a *solid* Peace of Mind and Conscience upon. And *here* he hath opened to our *full* View, such a ravishing Scene of Bliss in *another* World, as exceeds all created Thought and Conception.

AND doth not this Book of GOD claim the *greatest* Veneration from us? Should we not look upon it, and keep it as a most *sacred* Depositum, the greatest Trust which the GOD of Heaven could put into our Hands? Is here not room for *eternal* Praise and Thankfulness to an infinitely good GOD, that he would so *highly* favour us? What was all our *Race*, that the glorious Majesty of Heaven would *demean* himself so low, as thus to talk to us on Affairs of the *greatest* Moment and Importance to us? What an *inconsiderable* Creature Man! beneath the Almighty's Regards, and unworthy his Notice. What a *rebellious* Creature Man! deserving of the forest Wrath and Vengeance. And yet to this *inconsiderable*, this *rebellious* Creature, did Almighty GOD so far stoop, as to make a Revelation of himself and Will unto him. What were we in *these* Lands, that GOD should pitch upon us from among
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the Children of Men, to entrust his sacred Oracles with us, when so great a Part of the Nations of the Earth, are still sitting in Darkness and the Shadow of Death? Surely no *superior* Merit of ours could induce him hereto. No! it is an Act of Grace, of *free, distinguishing, sovereign* Grace, in GOD, who in this Respect *will have Mercy on whom he will have Mercy; and Compassion, upon whom he will have Compassion* *. In Judah is GOD known, his Name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his Tabernacle, and his Dwelling-Place in Sion. He sheweth his Word unto Jacob, his Statutes and his Judgments unto Israel; he hath not dealt so with any Nation; and as for his Judgments they have not known them Praise ye the LORD ||.

WHAT Book in the World like the Bible deserves our *careful* Reading, and diligent Attention? All that is *valuable*, which can be expected from the Perusal of other Writings, is to be found in a more *remarkable* Manner in the sacred Scriptures. What is it we look for, in poring over the Works, how *excellent* soever, of any uninspired Author?

* Romans ix. 15.

|| Psalm cxlvii. 19.

Is it Knowledge, Truth, Wisdom, Comfort, &c.? the Bible must have the Preference given it by every considering Man. The Law of the LORD is perfect, converting the Soul; the Testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the Simple; the Statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the Heart; the Commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the Eyes; the Fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever; the Judgments of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. Moreover by them is thy Servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great Reward *. And as his Judgment, so was the Practice of the pious Psalmist, and answerably great was the Benefit he reaped from thence. Hear him speaking for himself: O! how love I thy Law, it is my Meditation all the Day. Thou thro' thy Commandments hast made me wiser than my Enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more Understanding than all my Teachers, for thy Testimonies are my Meditation. I understand more than the Ancients, because I keep thy Precepts || What a poor Sign is it of a Christian's Veneration and Esteem for the sacred Writings, and of their Thankfulness to GOD

* Psalm xix. 7. 8. 9.

|| Psalm cxix. 97. 98.

for them, that they can suffer their *Bibles* to lie on their Shelves unopened, from one *Day, Week, Month* to another, while all the Time they can spare is taken up in reading any petty trifling Books, *Romances, Plays*, and such like? Was this the End, *my Brethren*, of GOD, in revealing his Will unto us, in the sacred Writings, that we should keep our Bibles (*as the Papiſts do their muſty Relicks*) inſhrin'd and untouch'd? Is this a *ſuitable* Return to GOD for his ſo great Goodneſs to us herein? I'll leave it to your own Conſciences to answer.

How *vigorouſly* alſo ſhould we ſet ourſelves? how *earnest* and *zealous* ſhould our Endeavours be to praſtiſe the *Duties* enjoined in the Scriptures? An holy Practice was the *Design* and *End* of the Scripture Revelation. GOD's Intention in making us *wiſe*, was to make us thereby *good*. Truth and Duty go Hand in Hand. Our Intereſt, *higheſt, eternal* Intereſt lies here at Stake. Rebellion againſt GOD, will be attended with unavoidable Ruin and Deſtruction to ourſelves. We want no *Encouragement* to Obedience. Our Reaſon conſents to the ſuitableneſs of every Command of GOD. Repentance towards GOD, through Faith in the Lord JESUS

CHRIST

CHRIST, will, *we are assured* *, obliterate all past Miscarriages. The Spirit of GOD stands ready, (*on our sincere Addresses to the Throne of Grace for his Aid*) to help our Infirmities, and assist our Weakness in our future Walk before GOD. And from Heaven there is held forth an immortal Crown of Glory to reward our *persevering* Study and Endeavour to please GOD. And what would we have more? What farther Spur and Motive can we desire? If we will not resolve and strive, upon these Arguments and Encouragements, to comply with the Will of GOD revealed, we may as well throw away our Bibles, as expect to receive any good from them. If ye know these Things, happy are ye, if ye do them †.

Secondly. SINCE we enjoy so advantageous a Privilege as the Scripture Revelation, how much greater must the Expectations of GOD be from us? and what a sad Account shall we have to give, if we have not suitably improved by it, in Knowledge and Virtue and Holiness? It is an eternal Maxim of Equity and Justice, unto whom-

* 1 John i. 9.

† John xiii. 17.

soever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom Men have committed much, of him they will ask the more *. Hath GOD been pleased out of his abundant Goodness to us, to favour us with more and greater Advantages for Wisdom and Holiness, than he hath vouchsafed to others? He doth, he cannot but look for an answerable Improvement from us. It will not be a sufficient Vindication of us Christians, in the Sight of GOD, that we know as much, and practise as well as Heathens: No! we must know more, and practise better, or we disappoint the Almighty.

FOR do but consider, Christian, the Difference GOD hath made between them and thee, in the Dispensations of his Grace and Favour, and thou must certainly give in to the Righteousness of GOD's Demands in this Respect; thou must see it to be unbecoming an All wise GOD, to put them and thee on the same Level. They are left altogether to the Guidance and Direction of their own Reason. All the Light they have, is borrowed from Nature. Their Reflection on the Works of GOD, and the Relation and Fitness of Things, is the

* Luke xii. 48.

only Source, from whence their Knowledge can be derived. How *careful* and long must their Searches be, e're they can arrive to a *competent* Acquaintance with the several Parts of their Duty? How diligently must they revolve over in their own Miuds, and faithfully *compare* one Thing with another, in order to see the *Respect* that they bear to each other, that they might determine their Conduct by it? This, 'tis manifest, must be the Work of *Labour*, and require no small Expence of *Time*.

As a *Man* now, thou hast the same *Advantages* they enjoy. But as a *Christian*, thou hast this *additional* one, that thou canst, *whensoever*, and as *often* as thou pleasest, have Recourse to the *written* Word of GOD, in which thou hast a most *complete* System of thy Duty, in every Branch of it, composed to thine Hands. Thou needest do no more than open thy *Bible*, and thou wilt see whatever is Good, and all that the LORD thy GOD requireth. of thee, engraven in such *plain* and *large* Characters, as to be legible to every Eye. *He that runs may read it.*

AND canst thou imagine, *Christian*, when thou considerest this, that *Ignorance* in thee is as excusable, and will meet with

the same Allowance from GOD, as in a poor *Heathen*? Hast thou not the greatest Reason to conclude, that as GOD hath vouchsafed unto thee greater *Degrees* of Light, he will look to find thee advanced to higher *Degrees* of Wisdom and Knowledge? Must not an *Heathen*, who by his indefatigable Care and Industry, hath rendered himself *equally* wise and knowing with thyself, make thee blush and be ashamed, when ye shall both stand before the Judgment-Seat of your common Creator and Governor? Since with the *same* Care and Industry he used, thou must unavoidably have out-stripped him, supposing your *natural* Parts equal.

AND as our *Knowledge*, so must our *Practice* of Virtue be more eminent than the *Heathen's*, or we shall not answer the Expectations of GOD from us. Supposing that a *Christian* and an *Heathen* had equal *Degrees* of Knowledge of their Duty communicated to them, yet inasmuch as a *Christian* hath more and stronger Arguments and Motives to comply with it, than an *Heathen*, GOD could not accept the *same* Measure of Obedience from both, with equal Satisfaction and Pleasure. No! the *Heathen* certainly, who without the Gospel Motives, proved as virtuous as the *Christian* with

with all his Motives, would be more pleasing to GOD, and Praise-worthy. We, *my Brethren*, have such powerful Considerations to move us, as an *Heathen* must be suppos'd an utter Stranger to. He hath not the *Assurance* of the *forgiving* Mercy of GOD, on Repentance, to excite him thereto, nor the *Knowledge* of the *redeeming* Love of CHRIST JESUS, to constrain him to Obedience. He hath no *Promise* of supernatural *Grace*, of the Divine Influences of the *Spirit* of GOD, to support, encourage, and comfort him in the Path of Virtue, nor the *certain* Hope of a blessed Immortality, to carry him on against all Difficulty and Opposition. And will a *wise* and *just* GOD, think we, make no Difference between him and us? Shall all those *Incitements* to Goodness, which we have, not at all be considered in Judgment? Will the *same* Degree of Virtue in us, the *same* *Attainments* in Holiness, that an *Heathen* hath, please GOD? GOD doth not, will not bestow such *superior* Favours, and expect no Manner of *Improvement* of them.

BUT, *Christians*, should we, after all the Advantages of the Scripture Revelation, remain *impenitently* wicked? Should we at the Great Day, be found still in *the Gall of Bitterness, and the Bonds of Iniquity?*
Should

Should we appear before the Tribunal of CHRIST, the *Slaves* of Sin, and *incorrigibly* vicious? Good GOD! how aggravated will be our *Guilt*? how inconceivably dreadful our *Damnation*? The State of an *Heathen* in the same vile and filthy Case will be *comparatively* happy in Respect of ours. He was not so *enlightened*, nor *tasted* of the *Heavenly Gift*, nor was made *Partaker* of the *Holy Ghost*, nor *tasted* of the *good Word* of GOD, nor the *Powers* of the *World to come*. He never sinned therefore against so *clear* a Light, nor so *great* Love, nor such *strong* Motives, as we shall have done. Our *Doom* therefore will be by far more terrible, and our *Hell* infinitely hotter.

THAT this way of reasoning under this Head, is every way agreeable to the Sense of the Gospel Revelation, I will leave you to judge, when I shall have laid before you the following Texts of Scripture. *If ye love them which love you, what Reward have ye? do not even the Publicans the same? And if ye salute your Brethren only, what do ye more than others *? Woe unto thee, Chorazin; Woe unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the mighty Works, which were done in you, had been*

* Matthew v. 46,

done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in Sackcloth and Ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, in the Day of Judgment, than for you. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto Heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell; for if the mighty Works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained untill this Day. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the Land of Sodom, in the Day of Judgment, than for thee *. The Men of Nineveh shall rise up in the Judgment with this Generation, and shall condemn it; for they repented at the Preaching of Jonas, and behold a greater than Jonas is here ||. The Servant which knew his Lord's Will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his Will, shall be beaten with many Stripes; but he that knew not, and did commit Things worthy of Stripes, shall be beaten with few Stripes †. This is the Condemnation that Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds were Evil ¶. If I had not come and spoken

* Matthew xi. 21. 22.

|| Luke xi. 32.

† Luke xii. 47.

¶ John iii. 19.

to them, they had not had Sin, but now they have no Cloak for their Sin *.

FROM all which Places it is evident, that GOD's *Expectations* from Men, are answerable to the *Advantages* he affordeth them; and their *Punishment*, if they mis-improve them, shall be *proportionable*; and forasmuch, consequently, as *Christians* enjoy greater *Advantages*, he expects they should do *more* than others; and if they do not, the more *severe* will be their *Punishment*.

Thirdly. How heartily should we pity and pray for those, to whom GOD, in his Providence hath not seen fit to vouchsafe this Revelation at all; and more especially should we pity and pray for those, who tho' they have this inestimable Privilege put into their Hands, undervalue it, and turn their Backs upon it.

GOD seems at our first Creation to have *implanted* in our Constitution, a *benevolent* Disposition towards all our fellow Creatures, and a *commiserating* Concern for all Objects of Misery and Distress. Our very *Natures*, unless we are strangely degenerate, will

* John xx. 22.

egg us forward to do all that lies in our Power, for the *Relief* of such. And if their Case appear *irremediable* by us, we are naturally inclined to *wish well* unto them; to testify our *compassionate* Regards unto them; and so far to serve them, as to recommend them to the *Mercy* of G O D, in our Addresses to him. This *natural* Principle is exceedingly encouraged and strengthened by the *Example*, and the express *Command* of G O D, in the *Gospel* Revelation. There we read our Saviour's Injunction to us, not only to love *them which love us*, but to love our *Enemies*; to bless *them that curse us*; to do good to *them that hate us*; and to pray for *them that despitefully use us*, and persecute us, upon this Consideration, that we might appear to be the *Children of our Father, which is in Heaven*; who maketh the *Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good*; and sendeth his *Rain on the Just, and on the Unjust* *. There we are exhorted, to rejoice with *them that do rejoice*, and to weep with *them that weep* ||.

THIS Concern and Care, which we have, towards the Welfare of others, should be in Proportion to their Straits and Exigencies; and

* Matthew v. 44.
|| Romans xii. 15.

principally regard their immortal, never-dying **Parts**. Charity to the *Souls* of Men, is the most excellent of all Charities. Their *Bodies* are in their own Nature corruptible, and of necessity will decay in Time, and moulder to Dust; whilst their immaterial *Spirits* shall exist for ever, and will be happy or miserable to all Eternity. The Interest of them therefore demands our highest Commiseration and Pity.

ARE we sensible of the exceeding great *Benefit* and Advantage of the Scripture Revelation to our Spiritual Interest? We cannot but be sensible of the exceeding great *Difficulties* they labour under, who are destitute of it. We have reason to be for ever thankful to GOD (as I intimated before) for his *distinguishing* Goodness of Providence towards us in this Respect, that he hath been pleased to communicate the Knowledge of it to us, whilst for certain, (*to be sure infinitely wise*) Reasons, he vouchsafeth not the Favour to the greater Part of our Race, for whose *Use* likewise it seems plainly to have been designed. GOD's *Judgments* herein are *unsearchable*, and his *Ways* past *finding out*. Our Business is *reverentially* to adore the *Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge* of GOD, which to us is an exceeding
great

great *Depth* *. Yet, I think, in the midst of our *Praises* and Thanksgivings to GOD, we should not forget to recommend to his *merciful* Regards, [as the common *Parent* of all Mankind, and the great *Lover* and *Redeemer* of Souls] the whole *Human* Race; a *World* that lieth in Wickedness; and make it Matter of our earnest Request to GOD, that his *Way* may be known upon Earth, and his *saving* Health among all Nations ||. That the People who now walk in Darkness may see the great *Light* of the Gospel, and they that dwell in the Land of the Shadow of Death, upon them this *Light* may shine †. That the Earth may be full of the Knowledge of the LORD, as the Waters cover the Seas §. That GOD would give CHRIST for a *Light* unto the Gentiles; that CHRIST might be his *Salvation* unto the Ends of the Earth ¶.

THIS is Charity truly *Human*, truly *Christian*; what becomes us as *Men*, and as the *Disciples* of the blessed JESUS. How must it raise our Bowels of Pity and Compassion, to consider, that *Myriads* of immor-

* Romans xi. 33.

|| Psalm lxvii. 2.

† Isaiah ix. 2.

§ Isaiah xi. 9.

¶ Isaiah xlix. 6.

tal Souls, capable of Happiness or Misery for ever, are now groping their Way to Bliss, amidst thick Clouds of Darkness, and seeking the LORD, if haply they might feel after him, and find him *? Whilst to us is given the Knowledge of Salvation by the Remission of our Sins, thro' the tender Mercy of our GOD, whereby the Day-Spring from on high hath visited us, to guide our Feet into the Way of Peace ||. No other Way have we to express our Commiseration for them, than by bearing them upon our Hearts, when we approach the Throne of Grace, and entreating the Father of Mercies, and GOD of all Grace, that we and they may be no longer two, but become one Fold under one Shepherd, the Lord JESUS CHRIST §.

BUT I cannot but say, that I think there are greater Objects of Pity, than the Heathens; I mean, the Deists of this our Day, who having the inestimable Privilege of the Gospel Revelation put into their Hands, undervalue it, and turn their Backs upon it. Their Case, I really take it, is far more dangerous, and their future Condition will be

* Acts xvii. 27.

|| Luke i. 77. 78.

§ John x. 16.

far worse than that of those who never had the Opportunity of seeing and hearing the Revelation of CHRIST JESUS. With respect to the Heathen World, I think, it is plain, that their Unbelief of, and Disobedience to, the peculiar Doctrines and Duties of Christianity, can never be imputed as a Crime to them, by an infinitely wise and good and merciful GOD. For how shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a Preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent *? But what Excuse shall we find for the Infidelity of the present Deists? The glad Tidings of the good Things of the Gospel, are brought home to their Doors. The Word of GOD is nigh unto them. The Scripture Revelation is put into their Hands. They may peruse and consider it at Leisure. They may hear it explained by those, whose constant Employment it is, to preach the Gospel of Peace.

THEY will say, perhaps, that Christianity is so stuff'd out with Doctrines and Duties of human Invention, that it appears to them a most frightful Monster, and unworthy the Acceptance

of a reasonable Being; that they must first renounce their rational Powers and Faculties, e're they can receive such a Religion, as a Divine Revelation.

I ALLOW there is too much Truth in the Objection. Were the particular Systems, by many so greedily embrac'd, and eagerly maintain'd, to be the Standard of the Christian Religion, I should not at all wonder at the Increase of Infidelity. But this is nothing at all to their Purpose; neither can it possibly be any Plea for their Unbelief? Is Christianity thus monstrously dress'd up in the Scripture? Can they there find any Foundation for those unreasonable Opinions complain'd of? They cannot say and prove it. If not, is it not a very unreasonable and unjust Conduct in them to reject a Divine Revelation, because it hath been abused?

OR will they say, that tho' there be nothing in the Scriptures inconsistent with, or contrary to, the natural Notions we have of GOD, and Moral Virtue, yet it doth not carry that external Evidence with it, as is sufficient to convince them, that it is of Divine Authority; and if the Evidence be not sufficient, GOD cannot expect it of them, that they should have Faith in it.

BUT

BUT before they proceed to *act* upon this Way of Reasoning, I would desire them *soberly* to consider, whether they have *sufficiently* examined the *Evidences* of Divine Authority, that *Christianity* carries along with it; whether they do not insist upon such Evidence, as it is *unreasonable* to demand; or whether culpable *Prejudice*, *Passion*, or *Lust*, have not so blinded their Eyes, as to prevent their seeing the proper Evidence of our Religion. One or other of these Things, *I fear*, will be found to be at the *bottom* of Modern Deism. Our *present* Infidels either have not *diligently* and *carefully* enough examined what Evidence the Gospel can really shew for its *Divine* Authority; or they expect *such* Evidence, as the *nature* of the Thing will not admit of; or they are so *prepossess'd* against it, or so much under the Influence of *corrupt* Affections, as to make them *wilfully* shut their Eyes against the Light. For I cannot believe that the All-wise G O D would ever give and propose a Revelation to the *Belief* of his *reasonable* Creatures, that should not be accompanied with *proper* Means of Conviction. And as it was designed to be of *standing* Use and Benefit to all succeeding Generations of Mankind, how could it answer its End, if *ever* destitute of *due* Evidence? Wherever the Gospel therefore comes,
published

published in a becoming Manner (and that it is so here in this Land of Liberty, I think no doubt can be made) The Words of CHRIST JESUS, in my Opinion, will hold as good, as when he spake them in Person upon Earth, If any Man will do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of GOD, or whether I speak of myself *.

* John vii. 17.

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